



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council**  
**Held Wednesday, July 26, 2000, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of the Recreation Department and the Greenbelt Association for the Visual Arts (GAVA)**

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Mr. Putens arrived at about 8:25 p.m.; Mr. Turnbull left at 9:25 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Jeff Williams, City Treasurer and Acting City Manager; David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk; Hank Irving, Director, Recreation Department; Joe McNeal, Community Center Supervisor; Nicole DeWald, Arts Coordinator; Greg Varda, Recreation Supervisor; and Mike Mirshahi, Community Center Leader.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Barbara Simon, Director, GAVA; Jessica Gitlis, Ceramic Studio Manager, GAVA; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; and Konrad Herling.

After introductions, the Mayor stated that the purpose of the meeting was to talk about the working relationship between GAVA and the Recreation Department staff. She emphasized that there was no issue on the table about the quality of the work of either GAVA or the Department; rather, the question is what their respective roles are with regard to decision-making about educational programming in the visual arts. Mayor Davis asked Ms. Simon if she would like to begin by speaking about how she perceives GAVA's role. Mr. White then expressed a preference for starting with the staff's perceptions, but the Mayor said she thought it better to let GAVA speak first.

Ms. Simon reviewed the evolution of GAVA and its relationship with the City and with the Community Center. GAVA and the City's agreement was originally based upon a model in use in Arlington County, where arts groups were provided free space by Arlington to provide their own autonomous programming. She said even at the beginning, it was not clear where GAVA fit into the schema of relationships that the City has with various nonprofit organizations (tenants, contribution groups, independent consultants, and contractors). Ms. Simon said she considers GAVA to be a contract group, contracting to provide a service; however, unlike a contractor, GAVA expects to make its own programming decisions.

It was clarified that although the City provides salary support in its funding to GAVA, it does not directly pay salaries to any GAVA staff members.

Mayor Davis asked what GAVA saw the role of the Recreation Department to be in its activities. Ms. Simon said the Department provides space, as well as free publicity through its listings in the Recreation Department bulletin. Asked if the Recreation Department should have any control over GAVA's staffing or programming, Ms. Simon said that GAVA welcomes the advice and suggestions of the Recreation Department but considers itself to be responsive directly to the community through its students/clients.

Mr. White asked about meetings alluded to in the staff memo to the City Manager of July 21, in which terms of the agreement were to be discussed. Ms. Gitlis responded that a number of issues had been resolved, including: some communication issues; provision by GAVA to the City of participant evaluations of programs; reporting; and commitment to participate in specific community events.

Mr. Irving said there had been what he considered to be a very constructive meeting between the Department and GAVA last week. He sees the relationship as a cooperative one but believes there are important reporting and accountability issues that are incumbent upon staff to assume responsibility for. He said the July 21 memo from staff was written to the City Manager at the City Manager's request to give an idea of what issues would be brought before Council but that it essentially did not contain any new information. Mr. White said that the issues were not clearly delineated in the memo.

Mr. Williams said he would assume responsibility for the current version of the memo, which had been revised at his request. He said that it was not clear what "independent contractor" meant as applied to the GAVA situation, since staff would normally define the work to be done under a contract.

Mr. White said he was still not hearing a clear articulation of the issues. Mr. McNeal acknowledged that there was some confusion and that this was part of the problem. He said that one specific problem was that the lack of clear parameters for City and GAVA responsibilities was one cause of the months of delay in negotiating the current contract. He added that if the City-GAVA relationship were a contract, then it would be the staff who would generate the specifications. Mr. White said that was not necessarily the case in a sole-source contract.

Mr. Turnbull suggested that the federal cooperative agreement (CA) might serve as a model for the City-GAVA relationship. A CA defines tasks as closely shared between the government agency and grantee. Ms. Simon said she would like more information about this. Mr. Turnbull said he would supply a sample agreement.

Further discussion revealed that in some respects the City staff considered GAVA to be an extension of the Recreation Department, since it operates under Department aegis and offers programs and services that are often assumed to be City programs and services. Ms. Simon objected to this characterization.

Given that the contract that should have been signed in September 1999 was signed only in April 2000, Mr. White asked how there could be much unresolved in the contract currently on the table for next year. Mr. McNeal said that some issues had deliberately been deferred from discussion

in April pending this meeting with Council. Mayor Davis asked about the likelihood of a timely signing this year. Ms. DeWald said she thought they were in fairly good shape. Mayor Davis went on to say that she thought a number of issues had been resolved: e.g., the Arts Coordinator's attendance at GAVA board meetings and access to meeting agendas, and GAVA's commitment to participate in special events. She asked if there were any other specific matters that needed to come to Council. Ms. DeWald asked about two touchstone issues: if the relationship is a partnership, how roadblocks in negotiations should be resolved; and whether staff has any authority to make changes it might like to see made in programming. With regard to the first question, Council said that any problems should be resolved via Mr. Irving and the City Manager as needed and that these matters should not return to Council for resolution. With regard to the second question, Council members said they considered GAVA to be independent. Mr. Putens added that GAVA did need to keep in mind, however, that the City is ultimately accountable for tax money.

Other business:

Mayor Davis distributed copies of a letter from her to the Elizabeth Hewlett, chair of the County Planning Board, regarding the City's position on a final plat of subdivision for PG Scrap. In April 1997, Greenbelt supported PG Scrap's application for preliminary plat on several conditions, which have not yet been demonstrated to the City as having been met. Mr. White asked Mr. Moran for more background information on this in the Friday V.I. if possible. Council also thought the letter to Ms. Hewlett should be faxed to Audrey Scott and to the state delegation.

Mayor Davis will circulate, sequentially, to the rest of Council a binder from a COG Board of Directors retreat that she attended. It contains information on a several issues that will be important over the next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk